

LOW POWER FM RADIO THE VOICE OF THE PEOPLE



Wade Rathke

AFFILIATED MEDIA FOUNDATION MOVEMENT

What is an LP-FM Radio Station

About seven years ago, the FCC opened up additional radio spectrum across the country, including in urban-metro areas where spectrum had been crowded. “Low-power” means that the station cannot broadcast at more than 100-watts or 1-kilowatt. Depending on the terrain and topography, that is usually about a three-mile radius. WAMF-LP, our station in New Orleans on flat terrain can reach more than a five-mile radius and with a clear signal, more than 300,000 people. KOCH-FM, our co-managed station in the Korogocho megaslum in Nairobi only broadcasts at 25-watts or .25-kw, but serves a population of over 400,000. It all depends on general topography and the height of the location or building where an antenna could be mounted.



What does it take to apply with the FCC

The FCC in recent days announced that it is opening the window for applications for LP-FM stations, so, once again, in many areas, this is a once in a lifetime opportunity. Please remember that when the spectrum is gone, it’s gone forever, and when you have a place on the spectrum, that is also renewable forever.

The applications all have to be submitted successfully during one week in November. Only nonprofit corporations are eligible to apply, although they are not required to be tax-exempt 501c3 organizations. If there are multiple applications, extra points are given to nonprofits that are 24-months or older. Extra points are also given if the board of the nonprofit is composed of individuals who live within 25-miles of the applicant’s desired location. No board member can be on the board of any other existing licensee. There is no cost involved in the application *per se*, and all applications are filed online. Saying all of this, the overarching determinant of an applicant’s success is two-fold: (1) accurate engineering and (2) broadcast area that serves the most people. A successful application would be notified in all likelihood early in 2024 and then be issued a construction permit (CP) and have three years to put the station on the air. Once achieved, the license is good for about eight years before renewal.



AM/FM believes in radio and wants to extend its network directly and with partners

As a voice for underserved communities without access to media, the Affiliated Media Foundation Movement ([AM/FM](#)) believes that radio is a critical tool giving such communities voice and a megaphone as well as allowing



them to support the kind of programming they want to hear. Over the last forty years, we have built terrestrial, full-power stations in Tampa, Dallas, and Little Rock, and continue to manage [KABF](#) at 100,000-watts broadcasting from Little Rock, as well as [WAMF-LP](#) in New Orleans. We co-managed WDSV in Greenville, MS, and KOCH-FM in Nairobi, as well as managing the internet streaming for all of these properties and [ACORN Radio](#) for our members worldwide and [Radio ACORN](#) in Uganda. We currently have been issued seven construction permits for terrestrial stations in Arkansas, Colorado, and New Mexico. In some cases, we may turn back some of these permits in favor of applications for low-power stations, if that is more practicable in these communities. AM/FM is likely to

organize and encourage applications near our existing radio footprints (AR/MS/LA/TX/CO/NM), either by directly organizing nonprofit corporations to apply or by applying with local partners where we will negotiate contracts to apply, manage, and operate the stations, as well as supply and distribute content throughout the network.

What do I know about radio? How can I make this happen?

Our experience is that a low-power station can be built in the range of \$10,000 and can be maintained for less than that amount annually. Costs are also lower if a friendly building owner will allow an antenna to be placed there, and if a room for a broadcast studio is available at a reasonable price.

Thirty or forty years ago, we couldn't have imagined that this was possible, but now it is also easier to program a radio station with remote software that can help fill the 144 hours of broadcast time per week and mix local programming with the best programming throughout the Voice of the People Network. We can support local stations from our studios in New Orleans and Little Rock with assistance from our "cleaner" in Puerto Rico.

We have a tip-top engineer with almost a perfect record of success in doing the engineering and working with us to shepherd the applications to success. Where we can find trusted partners who are willing to care for the stations locally outside of our own footprint, we want to join with them now to make this happen in places



like Easthampton, Massachusetts or Roswell, New Mexico or Drew, Mississippi in Sunflower County.

Maybe even where you and your organization work?

If interested?

Contact wade@affiliatedmediamovement.org or chaco@affiliatedmediamovement.org and let's see what might be possible, as soon as possible.

